

Drew Elementary

Come In and Learn

ARTICLE BY HEATHER SCHOELL | PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DeANGELIA

Working smart *AND* hard has made Drew Elementary School a target – a target for a school to watch, a school to reconsider and a school to get into. Drew's 2009 DC CAS (Comprehensive Assessment System) test scores improved by leaps and bounds – they had the highest percentage of improvement in the city. With a delightful and excited principal at the helm, now may be the time to get into Drew, your Ward 7 neighborhood school at 55th and Eads streets NE.



LEFT: Mr. Cannon's pre-k students point to the letters.
BELOW: Principal Kimberly Davis with kindergartners.
Photos by Michael DeAngelis, courtesy of DCPS.



Data Drives Instruction

First and foremost, Principal Kimberly Davis wants it known that Drew Elementary is working smartly, by examining test data, by evaluating student work, by daily walkthroughs of the classrooms and activities. The data shows strong points and weak points of instruction and learning. A well- or poorly-constructed creative response (CR), formerly known as the “essay question,” shows that, too. It is all taken in and discussed at twice-weekly collaborative lesson studies, which help refine lesson plans to accommodate areas that need improvement and help support teachers by identifying where they can be assisted by staff to provide more opportunities for deferential learning.

“Our focus is on literacy,” said Davis, who is in her second year at Drew. Actually, Davis did her residency training at Drew in 2005 under Principal Steven Roseman during her time in the New Leaders for New Schools program. So she has come “home.” Davis’ excitement about the direction that Drew is taking and their massive gains in test scores has permeated the halls and the staff from stem to stern.

In July 2009, when DC CAS results were released, Drew was center stage. From a DCPS press release: “The Fenty Administration selected Drew Elementary school in Ward 7 as the site for this year’s announcement to recognize the students, the principal and teachers for their hard work, which produced remarkable gains in reading and math. Drew doubled its reading proficiency and quintupled its math proficiency... they had an 18-point increase in reading and a 28 percent increase in math, bringing their proficiency rates up to 31 percent and 34 percent respectively.”

These incredible gains are not accidental, but a systematic approach and unfaltering intention of bringing every single student to where he or she needs to be. “We made the highest gains in the city,” said Davis excitedly. She does not intend to maintain these particular scores, however. “Our goal is a minimum of a 10 percent increase in reading and math.”

A Day at School

Students from Head Start to fifth grade report to school in uniform – green bottoms and yellow tops. “Breakfast is offered from 8 to 8:30 a.m. Students recite the school pledge and the Pledge of Allegiance at 8:25 a.m. Teachers stand at their classroom doors, ready to receive students at 8:40 a.m., and phonics begin at 8:50 a.m.,” Davis said. If this sounds regimented, it’s because it is. “Punctuality is everything,” Davis explained. “We maximize every minute.” Even leaving the class is an opportunity to learn. “We have ‘exit tickets’ – a question asked to get out of the class.” Said with a dour face, this may have been off-putting, but Davis’ smile is warm and her attitude positive. It is obvious that she is truly excited to see her students succeed.

There are three lunch periods, broken down by grade level, staggering the little people, to the middle grades, then the upper grades.

Reading blocks, broken down by reading ability, are built into the daily routine. Shelves in a reading nook offer books for the taking. Again, the focus is on literacy – strong reading skills are essential for learning all subjects.

A day out of school is a missed opportunity for learning. “Our goal is 90 percent attendance every day,” said Davis. “We honor classes with 100 percent.” The art teacher and a talented instruc-

tional aide adorn the hallway with fun and colorful banners celebrating attendance and other student successes.

All Together Now

Drew staff works together, and everyone is seen as an educator at Drew. “Everyone is held accountable for learning. The custodians serve as mentors and will call out math facts as they sweep,” said Davis. “Teachers sign math questions to students as they walk through the halls between classes,” she said, illustrating the different arm signs for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The security guard, Officer Mickle, reads with students and knows all by name.

Davis is excited about expanding Drew’s partnerships. The school nurse, Ms. Moore, obtained a grant for the Fit Kids Club, a twice-weekly after-school wellness activity that provides equipment such as mats, balls and resistance bands, as well as a physical therapist from Children’s Hospital. Mr. Cooke, who joined Drew in October as the second-grade teacher, brought his partnership skills to the table, securing a Martha Speaks Reading Buddies Program grant that pairs fourth-graders with kindergartners, building vocabulary and strengthening reading. “We make the most of what we have as far as staff and resources,” said Davis.

Teaching and Learning

Last school year, Drew offered single-sex classrooms – a bold move that worked. “It helped us tap into further learning,” Davis said. The students fully embraced the ease that came from learning among a single gender, so they were disappointed when this year,

due to budget constraints, Davis had to reintegrate the classes.

But Davis is not one to sit and pout – she is forging ahead with different strategies for teaching and learning. “We employ multiple learning modalities – touch, speech, visual,” explained Davis. For example, they use touch-point math, great for the visual and tactile learners, where math facts become more concrete and less conceptual. “We are looking ahead to make sure all students are at level, ready for the next grade.”

Incentives make school goal-based. Students earn a spot in a drawing for great prizes, including a visit to the Capitol and a trip to FedEx Field to meet the Redskins. Davis has given the older students ownership of their education, keeping them abreast of what they need to know and a visual on how they are doing as individual learners. “We keep children involved with learning. They own it because, starting in third grade, they see where they are,” she said. “They know the standards they must learn, and they know if they have mastered them.”

Coming Soon

Drew is slated for modernization during the summer of 2010, meaning that it will open in the fall looking like a brand-new school with gleaming windows, wireless technology, and all the bells and whistles. Call the school at 202-724-4922 to schedule a visit. Drew Elementary is at 5600 Eads St. NE.

Heather Schoell is a regular contributor to Capital Community News and can be reached at hschoell@verizon.net. ★



Kids & Family Notebook

Jasia Smith (center) of Burrville Elementary School, the individual winner of the Eastside Slam! with DC United player Clyde Sims (left) and Washington Freedom player Abby Wambach (right).

DS SCORES Poetry Slam! Recap

The 12th annual DC SCORES Poetry Slam!, held Dec. 2 and 3 on different sides of the city, showcased 700 young District poets reciting original works in front of large audiences. The Eastside Slam! was on Dec. 3 and featured students from 10 elementary and middle schools in Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8. Washington Freedom player and former Olympic hero Abby Wambach as well as DC United player Clyde Simms were honorary judges who cheered on the DC SCORES kids, who aimed to impress the panel of real judges at Kelly Miller Middle School.

All of the poems read were written by DC SCORES students over the past two months during workshops at their respective schools. DC SCORES,

fit, engaged students, and agents of change in their communities.

An added aspect of the 2009 event was that Stephen Harrell of Bicycle Stations donated a new bike to a boy and a girl from each DC SCORES school who displayed the most leadership throughout the season. Bicycle Stations is a store near 14th and W streets that opened in 2009 to motivate the DC community to make healthier decisions by commuting on bicycles.

The Arts and Technology Academy poets won the Eastside Slam! and the Golden Mic trophy for their performance of three poems that addressed the violence issues in their community.

Below is a full list of the Eastside Slam! winners:

Arts and Technology Academy

– first place

Burrville Elementary School

– second place

Anne Beers Elementary School

– second place

Howard Road Academy

– spirit award

Kelly Miller Middle School

– first place, middle schools

Cesar Chavez Public Charter Middle School

– second place, middle schools

Jefferson Middle School

– spirit award, middle schools

Jasia Smith of Burrville won the Shine Award for the best individual poem by an elementary school student. She performed “Let’s All Save the World Together.” Kristina Fleming won the middle school Shine Award for performing a rousing rendition of the national anthem.

Visit www.americascorers.org for more information on DS SCORES.

Classroom Demonstration: Afro-Mexican Instruments

In a hands-on demonstration, music educator Bill Jenkins will visit with a school class, Jan. 14, 10 a.m., at the Anacostia Community Museum, and discuss the marimba, guiros and other traditional Mexican musical instruments of African origin that are played in the Veracruz and Costa Chica regions. Participants will get to play and sing together using authentic Mexican instruments. This program is free of charge and suitable for all ages. For reservations, call 202-633-4844. The museum is located

at 1901 Fort Place SE. Visit Anacostia.si.edu for more information.

Youth Choir Auditions and Acting Workshop at the Atlas

American Youth Chorus, DC’s new choral group for children ages 8-14, is holding auditions this month for its spring 2010 season, which includes performances at the Atlas Performing Arts Center and the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. The chorus is looking to expand its ranks to over 60 children in 2010. Rehearsals are held weekly, after school, at the Atlas Per-

forming Arts Center, 1333 H St. NE. To schedule an audition, contact Debby McConnell at 202-399-7993 ext. 182, or e-mail debby_mcconnell@congressionalchorus.org.

MASSIVE Company Acting workshop for youth takes place Jan. 23 and 24 at the Atlas Performing Arts Center (1333 H St. NE). Sam Scott, artistic director of New Zealand’s Massive Company, leads this workshop, which is designed for young people ages 15-25. This intensive acting and theater workshop is free to all. For more information and registration, contact Jen DeMayo, jendemayo@atlasarts.org. This workshop is

made possible by a gift from the Capitol Hill Community Foundation. Visit www.atlasarts.org for more information about the Atlas.

Discovery Theater Presents: ‘Going the Distance’

Children ages 6-11 will enjoy this play about the rise of two great African-American Olympians, Jesse Owens and Wilma Rudolph, as they overcome childhood illness, poverty and prejudice to become the world’s fastest man and fastest woman – and win Olympic gold medals. Shows are Jan. 15, 10:15 a.m.

and 11:30 a.m. \$4-\$6. 1100 Jefferson Drive SW. 202-633-8700, www.discoverytheater.org.

KanKouran West African Dance Company

KanKouran West African Dance Company returns to Dance Place for their annual performance in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., Jan. 16, 8 p.m., and Jan. 17, 4 p.m. Sunday's performance is part of the family series: free for one child (12 and under) with each paying adult. Recommended for children ages 5 and up. General admission \$22; members, students, teachers (PreK-12), professional artists and seniors \$17; children (2-17) \$8. 3225 Eighth St. NE. 202-269-1600, www.danceplace.org.

Let's Read About Africa Story Time

Children ages 6 and up and their caregivers are invited to hear storyteller Diane Macklin share stories of Africa by award-winning authors, Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, 9 & 24, 10:30-11:30 a.m., at the National Museum of African Art. Free. 950 Independence Ave. SW. 202-633-4600, Africa.si.edu.

Explore the Sounds of Africa

Children, ages 6 and up, can stop by the African Art Museum Jan. 15 and 22 and Feb. 12 and 19, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. and learn about African polyrhythms and syncopation while playing a variety of African instruments with Ugandan musician Daniel Ssuuna. Free. 950 Independence Ave. SW. 202-633-4600, Africa.si.edu.

Happy Birthday, FDR!

Celebrate President Franklin D. Roosevelt's birthday at the Postal Museum, Jan. 30, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., enjoying FDR's favorite hobby – spending time with stamp collections. Visitors will also have a chance to participate in "Stamp Charades." And be sure to explore the related exhibition titled, "Delivering Hope: FDR & Stamps of the Great Depression." Participating in this program helps Junior Girl Scouts work towards the "Collecting Hobbies" badge. Open to all ages. Free. 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE. 202-633-5534. www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

Children's Programs at NCM

The National Children's Museum will host the following activities for children in December at the National



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For the more mature ones, Discovery Adventure Camps offers a full array of exciting offerings from cruising the Potomac and the Anacostia Rivers aboard the Half Shell, our historic Chesapeake Bay buy boat, to daily escapades which include rock climbing, canoeing, swimming, biking, and more. Camps at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens will inspire your young Explorers and Adventurers to let their imagination run wild. An Adventurer camps favorite, Marooned, is back by popular demand! Campers will have a chance to explore the local flora and fauna, and hike Kingman Island for some treasure hunts. Please visit www.livingclassroomsdc.org/SummerCamp often for updates on registration and to find out more about camp offerings. Make sure to also visit our family program's page for a sneak peak of the activities and events going on at our sites until the camps start!

If you wish to receive a brochure of our 2010 camps, please contact Anne Zuk, Director of Camps
AZuk@LivingClassroomsDC.org or 202-488-0627 ext 236



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Performers from CityDance Ensemble

Wild Side Stage at the National Zoo

This winter, Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ) will present Wild Side Stage, a new performance series for children featuring acclaimed, award-winning musicians, dancers, storytellers and puppeteers from around the country. Performances will take place in the National Zoo's visitor center auditorium on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Before and after each performance (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.), guests can visit certain animal exhibits for the chance to meet animal keepers as well as the animals featured in the performances. The Sunday performance schedule for January is: Jan. 10, Brady Rymer (ages 2 and up), and Jan. 24, CityDance Ensemble (ages 3 and up). Looking ahead, the first performance in February is Feb. 7, DinoRock (ages 4 and up). Tickets are \$5 for FONZ members, \$7 for nonmembers. Adults and children ages 2 and older require tickets. Children under 2 are admitted free with a parent. Purchase tickets at www.fonz.org/wildsidestage.htm, through Ticketmaster at 202-397-SEAT, at the zoo's gift shops (Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) or on the day of the event (if not sold out).

Harbor's Launch Zone (unless otherwise noted).

- Wee Wonders' Hawaiian Vacation, Jan. 12, 19 & 26, 10 a.m.-11:15 a.m. Children (ages 2-3) can escape the chilly weather and explore the tropical paradise of Hawaii. Parents and caregivers, along with their child, can learn about the islands, plants, animals and culture through stories, games, art, music, experiments, drama, and movement. \$10/child. Limit two children per adult. Pre-registration and advance payment required by the Friday prior to the event. Call 202-675-4120 or e-mail RSVP@ncm.museum to register.
- MLK Day of Service: Catnip Creations, Jan. 18, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Children will make colorful and fun catnip toys to be donated to a local animal shelter. The Launch Zone will also donate bedding materials to shelter animals, so bring old blankets and towels.
- Celebrate the Taste of Nab-lus, Jan. 23, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Explore Palestinian food and culture through images and narratives highlighting children in the city of Nab-lus. The celebration includes hands-on activities, food and entertainment.

NCM is located at 112 Waterfront St., National Harbor, Md. 301-686-0225, www.ncm.museum.


NSO Kinderkonzert: Magical Mozart

The Unlikely Trio (NSO musicians Carole Bean, flute, Dotian Levalier, harp, and William Wielgus, oboe) performs a wonderful array of Mozart's greatest works Jan. 30, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., at the Kennedy Center. Recommended for children ages 4-19. \$18. 2700 F St. NW. 202-467-4600, www.kennedy-center.org.

The 2010 Children's Gallery of Black History


This year's Children's Gallery of Black History has the theme: "Rise Up! The Journey for Economic Empowerment

Worldwide" and will celebrate those who pushed against the odds to attain community and financial sustainability. Visitors will be able to participate in hands-on learning exhibits that explore the life and achievements of visionary minority leaders. The gallery will pay tribute to eight momentous men and women, including Nina Simone, Carter G. Woodson, Dikembe Mutombo and A. Philip Randolph. The purpose of this year's theme is to empower children to realize that they too have the power to overcome the cycles of hardship in their lives and communities. The dates of this year's gallery are Feb. 16-19 and Feb. 22-6, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., at All Souls Church (16th and Harvard streets NW). After-school groups can register for visits from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Gallery is closed on the weekends. Admission is 50 cents/child; \$2/adult. Group rates available. Call 202-545-1919 or e-mail tricia.momiestlc@gmail.com for more information or to schedule your group. ★




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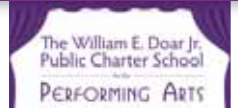
- January 14th, 2010 from 9:30-10:30 am
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Regan Leslie Ford, Director, Southeast Washington, DC Campus at THEARC. Photo: Courtesy The Levine School of Music

An Interview with Regan Ford of the Levine School of Music

BY REV. KIP BANKS

It's a new year and with it comes a desire from many of us to do new things and to take advantage of fresh opportunities offered in our community. There's so much to do in East Washington, but often residents don't take advantage of what's being offered because they are not aware of all that is going on. In light of this, I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Regan Ford, the new Director of the Levine School of Music's Southeast Campus and to ask her about what's going on at the Levine School at the ARC.

Tell me about the Levine program here at the ARC.

The Levine school of music is the oldest community music school in DC. We are a non-profit organization and we rely heavily on grants and donations. Our program was established here in Southeast, DC in 2005. We came on as one of the inaugural partners of The ARC. Our goal was to offer a program in music and voice to the Wards 7 and 8 communities – also known as the East of the River community.

On a personal level, this job is very fulfilling for me. I remember what it was like to grow up in Ward 7 as a 13-year-old who liked art. Unfortunately, there were very few outlets in the East Washington community to nurture my interest in art and that is what Levine seeks to provide. Our goal is to provide a healthy nurturing arts-inspired environment where relationships can be established that will last for a lifetime.

What does "THE ARC" stand for?

The Arc is an acronym for Town Hall Education and Arts Recreation Campus. THE

ARC is a state of the art facility and several partner organizations provide programming within the building -- the Levine School of Music, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Washington Ballet, the Washington Middle School for Girls, Trinity College, and the Boys and Girls Club of Washington.

What type of programs do you offer?

We have an Early Childhood Elementary Music Class (ECEMC) for youngsters from four months to five years old – it is one of our most popular programs. This program introduces young people to music. It provides an opportunity for children not quite old enough to begin a specific instrument to get immersed in music and once they have completed this class, by five years of age, they often lean toward a certain instrument.

We also offer piano, flute, guitar, percussion, violin, Suzuki piano, cello and voice lessons for children and adults. Furthermore, we offer cultural programs. For example, Esai Barnwell with the group Sweet Honey and the Rock, recently came to our recital hall and did a community choir sing which was open to the public.

Who are some of your noteworthy faculty members? We have Joyce Lundy, a very well know opera singer who is very rooted in the community. She teaches vocals. We also have Dr. Jacob Clark who teaches piano.

Why don't more people in Southeast Washington take advantage of the ARC and the Levine programs?

I don't think the members of our community fully realize that our programs are here for them. This facility belongs to the community; however, I don't think that most members of the community understand what the ARC and our programs are all about. We do have fees associated with our classes, but we also have a tuition assistance program that people can apply for. We also are working to provide more programming that is of interest to the community. For example, we have found a great interest in guitar and percussion lessons and so we have begun to offer a broader range of classes.

What are some of the challenges that you face in the new year?

The real challenge is to get members of this community to take ownership of the ARC, and to register and attend classes. We also want to showcase the talent that we have in our community. We have so much talent in Ward 7 and in Ward 8 and we want to be more involved in giving this talent an outlet.

How can someone find out more information about your programs?

If someone wants more information about the Levine School of Music or THE ARC they can call Regan Ford at 202-686-8000, Ext 1201 or find us on the web at www.levineschool.org/southeast or www.thearc.org

Rev. Kip Banks is Senior Pastor of the East Washington Heights Baptist Church. ★

Ferebee-Hope Kidumentaries Premier

Live It Learn It, National Geographic Expand Their Collaboration

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ



Teacher Brenda Hallums and Ferebee-Hope student filmmakers at National Geographic headquarters

Young filmmakers at Ferebee-Hope Elementary School released 15 short documentaries on Dec. 10. Students in Ms. Hallums' sixth-grade class wrote, directed and filmed Kidumentaries, premiering at National Geographic's Grosvenor Auditorium.

Films took viewers into student homes and described experiences from the local SplashPark to Viet Nam. Autobiographies illustrated the power of reading, dance, music, cheer leading and sports, faith and family. Concern for the environment and maintaining positive living spaces were also strong themes. Biographies highlighted the inspiration of sisters, cousins, aunts and a grandfather. Several films mentioned young people's responsibility to inspire and support others.

Kidumentaries

Kidumentaries is a collaboration of the nonprofit Live It Learn It (LILI) and National Geographic Channel (NGC). Now in its fifth year, LILI partners with 18 DC Public Schools to provide experiential learning in fourth through sixth grades. Three trips per year – chosen by teachers in consultation with LILI staff -- are "scaffolded" by pre- and post-trip lessons and assessments to help students and teachers make the most of the experiences.

National Geographic promotes "geo-literacy -- the ability to reason about the world to make personal, professional, and civic decisions." NGC serves this mission through world-renowned video productions.

Ms. Hallums' classes have worked with LILI for four years. Her current sixth grade is the second class to par-

ticipate in the new Kidumentaries project.

LILI conceived the idea, helped design lesson plans and assisted with teaching. NGC helped craft the film-making curriculum, and staff members taught camera and storyboarding techniques.

The six-week pilot program was launched last year at River Terrace Elementary in Ward 7.

Fifth-grade filmmakers created how-tos or autobiographies (see May 2009 EOR). This year's three-month program focuses on biography. The second sixth-grade class at Ferebee-Hope will participate in the spring.

'Many Cooks'

The longer program allowed LILI to provide more support and gave students more time to develop ownership of their projects, says executive director Matthew Wheelock. In addition, more NGC staff members spent more time with students: Drew Jones, Katarina Price and others joined Madeleine Carter, Mark Green and Timothy Joyce, who participated last year.

Price found that biography proved a "great vehicle for kids to bring all their skills together...to use creativity and teamwork," while Jones was impressed by the students' eagerness to learn and by the school's welcome. "It was great to be able to have an impact."

Veteran teacher Brenda Hallums, in turn, notes that NGC's presence for a few weeks will have a far-reaching influence.

"Any time students are excited, learning sticks," Hallums explains.

Film is a collaborative enterprise, LILI's Erika Harper said at the premier. And Kidumentaries provided an example where "too many cooks did not spoil the soup."

For more information, visit www.LiveItLearnIt.org, call 202-546-6223, or contact Ferebee-Hope: 3999 8th St., SE., 202-645-3100. ★

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